

Shoeshine Girl
by Clyde Robert Bulla

Annotation

The last thing Sarah Ida wants to do is spend the summer with Aunt Claudia. But when her parents send her away because of problems at home, that is exactly what she has to do! With no allowance and no fun to be had, Sarah Ida decides to look for a job. The only person who will hire her is Al, the man who runs the shoeshine stand, and soon she is knee-deep in shoe polish. Then something happens and it looks like the shoeshine stand will have to close forever. If Sarah Ida wants to keep it open, she'll have to learn a few lessons about growing up along the way.....

About the Author

Clyde Robert Bulla was born January 9, 1914 on a farm near King City, Missouri. He went to a one-room country school, and soon was writing his own stories and verses. Words fascinated him. They still do. He announced at home that he was going to be a writer. His father told him, "You can't be a writer. You haven't been anywhere or done anything. You don't have anything to write about".

For years it looked as if his father might be right. No one wanted the stories Clyde wrote. But when he was 20 he sold one. It was to a pulp magazine. Then he sold another and another. The stories may have been terrible, but the sales helped him and his family through the Depression, and all the time he was learning.

He moved to town and worked on a newspaper. In spare time he wrote. A teacher friend suggested that he write for children. He told her he had no ideas. She gave him one. He didn't much like it, but not wanting to disappoint her, he wrote the story, THE DONKEY CART. It was his first published children's book.

He finished his second book and began to be excited about writing for boys and girls. He knew he wanted to keep writing for them. He moved to California. He traveled and wrote about things and places he had seen. He saw operas and wrote books about them. More than 80 of his books have been published.

Now, after 50 years in Los Angeles, he is moving back to his native state. To retire? People ask." No" he says, "writers don't retire."

Book Club Activities

- Bake some cupcakes the way Aunt Claudia did when taking Sarah Ida to the bus station.
- Purchase some aprons similar to the one Sarah Ida wore and have the kids decorate them.
- Buy a lampshade kit and have the kids make one like the way Rossi and Sarah Ida made.

Discussion Guide for Shoeshine Girl

- 1) When arriving in Palmville, Sarah Ida doesn't want to get off the bus; she wants to go somewhere she's never been to.
 - Have you ever felt like you don't want to go somewhere?
 - Somewhere new where you felt nervous or frightened?
- 2) Money and friendship are strong themes of the book.
 - Why do you think it was so important for Sarah Ida to have money?
 - How do you think Rossi felt when Sarah Ida took money from her piggy bank? (Do you think Rossi let Sarah Ida have the money so they could be friends?)
 - Have you ever lent anyone something so they could be your friend?
- 3) Sarah Ida said she wanted to get a job. What kind of job would you like to get if you had to find one?
- 4) Sarah Ida meets Al and says she wants to work for him. How does Sarah Ida convince Al that she wanted the job?
- 5) Sarah Ida isn't so friendly and sometimes people aren't so friendly towards her (like when one of the customers didn't give her a tip). When Sarah Ida called him a name, Al got very mad. Why did Al get mad at her? Why does Sarah Ida have trouble respecting others?
- 6) When Al tells Sarah Ida about getting a medal at school, Sarah Ida said something to hurt Al's feelings.
 - What do you think happen between them?
 - Did you ever say something to someone that you then regretted or felt bad about?
 - How do you think they got to be friends again? Do you think saying sorry to someone helps?
- 7) Do you think Sarah Ida was brave to keep the stand open? Why do you think Sarah Ida didn't keep the money for herself?
- 8) Kicker was trying to help Sarah Ida. How can you tell if someone is trying to help? Has someone ever tried to help you even if you didn't want help?
- 9) Rossi really wants to be friends with Sarah Ida. Do you think Rossi has a lot of patience?
- 10) What was it about the apron that made Sarah Ida feel so special?
- 11) Now that Sarah Ida is proud of herself for keeping the stand open, does Sarah Ida seem more open to people and does she seem happier? Why?
- 12) Why do you think Al gave her the medal? How did it make her feel when he gave it to her?
- 13) Who was your favorite character? What did you appreciate about him/her?
- 14) Consider the main character, Sarah Ida. What does she believe in? What is she willing to fight for?
- 15) At the end of the book, do you feel hope for the characters?

16) What makes a minor character memorable? Which of the minor characters was most memorable for you?

17) Was the story credible? Were the characters credible?

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